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State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Indian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the humanitarian leader and peace envoy, at the Office of the SAC Chairman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar to aid Myanmar in achieving peace and stability

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Indian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar exchange views on Myanmar’s efforts to prepare for a free and fair multiparty democratic general election.

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Indian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the humanitarian leader and peace envoy, at the Credentials Hall of the Office of the SAC Chairman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

At the meeting, the Senior General extended greetings, expressing that he warmly welcomed the visit of the Indian Gurudev who has been striving to forge peace worldwide in various ways and means.

The Indian Gurudev mentioned that his visit to Myanmar is to provide support in any possible way for the peace and prosperity of the country. It is also an honour and a pleasure to meet and discuss with the State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister.

They cordially exchanged views on political changes from the post-independence era to date in Myanmar, occurrences of armed conflicts of ethnics due to external instigations from the post-independence era, efforts to restore internal peace in successive

eras, democratization process starting from 2011, discharging State responsibilities by Tatmadaw due to voting fraud in the 2020 multiparty democratic general elections, occurrences of terror acts based on unrest triggered by different political ideologies, endeavours of the State Administration Council emphasizing peace and stability of the State and development undertakings, negotiation efforts of the Indian humanitarian leader and peace envoy to restore peace in many countries worldwide, plans of the Indian Gurudev to help Myan-

mar ensure peace and stability, and Myanmar’s efforts to make preparations to hold a free and fair multiparty democratic general election.

Also, present at the meeting were SAC Joint Secretary General Ye Win Oo, Council Member Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Union Ministers U Than Swe and U Tin Oo Lwin. Delegation members accompanied the Indian Gurudev.

The Senior General conducted the Indian Gurudev around the honorary hall where paintings are displayed.—MNA/TTA

NATIONAL

Unlocking Knowledge: The Essential Role of Libraries and Reading Habits

- A library is an institution dedicated to disseminating knowledge.
- It is essential to cultivate a reading habit.
- Individuals should read books to acquire knowledge.
- They must take notes from their readings to deepen their understanding.
- Reading is a powerful tool for accumulating knowledge.

(Excerpt from the speech given by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to the ceremony to donate cash and books to libraries across the nation for their development on 10 April 2024)



National Objectives for 78th Anniversary of Union Day 2025

1. To strive for the perpetual development of the Union through the Union spirit, patriotic values, a sublime state of mind and a genuine nationalist spirit.
2. To encourage collaborative efforts among all ethnic nationals to pursue dialogue for durable peace and to end armed conflicts.
3. To collectively advance cooperation amongst all national people, the government, and Tatmadaw to ensure stability and the rule of law.
4. To enhance collaborative efforts to ensure nationwide stability and tranquillity, enabling the successful conduct of multiparty general elections.
5. To promote balanced development across all regions and states, as well as enhance health, education and job opportunities for ethnic nationals.

Mottos for 78th Union Day 2025

1. When all ethnic national brethren stand in unity, hand in hand, the Union will firmly stand.
2. Drifting in one boat, on the same voyage we float; Bound together in communion, the heart of the Union.
3. United in heart and soul, Marching towards the Union's goal.
4. Let's build peace to achieve prosperity.
5. Strong in unity, Ethnic national brethren ensure the nation's strength.

Gold Market Rate as of 9 February 2025

THE price of one tical (16.329325 grammes) of gold with density of 19.25 grammes per cubic centimetre and above is K5,480,000 as established by the Mineral (Gold) Reference Price Determination Committee.



Cassava price goes down this year

FARMERS are unhappy as this year's opening price for cassava has been lower than that of last year.

As traders still have the remaining cassava flour produced in last year, this year's price is just about one third of last year's price and it can just barely cover the cost, said farmers.

"It is harvest time of cassava

roots. In fact, roots can be dug in January but we have to see the market. For now, the cassava market has declined since Chinese New Year, because the supply of cassava flour is still left a lot at wholesale trading centres and another factor is transportation barrier. That makes farmers unhappy," said a cassava farmer, Ko Thura Aung from Hinthada

Township.

The cassava price is likely to continue falling further over next months. Cassava flour is mainly purchased by China for using it in making ceramics strengthen.

"Over next couples of months, digging of cassava roots will end and the supply will be larger, so the price will fall further. Cassava flour can be substituted



A cassava farm.

with wheat flour and for making ceramics in China. That is why, China is the major buyer," he added. — Thit Taw/ZS

NATIONAL

Residents Urged to Prioritize Public Safety Amid Armed Terrorist Threats

ARMED terrorists have been launching attacks by using residential homes and administrative buildings in towns and villages as cover, where they have forcibly settled. They aim to shield themselves from Tatmadaw counterattacks while also persuading temporarily displaced persons to return to their native areas and recruiting new members. That enables terrorists to use civilians as human shields. Tatmadaw is committed to safeguarding the sovereignty of the State and will respond to these threats based on intelligence and prevailing conditions. Therefore, residents in areas where terrorists have taken control must prioritize their safety and protect themselves from being exploited by these groups.

(Excerpt from guidance given by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to Shan State cabinet members and state-level departmental officials on 3 September 2024)

Artistes must craft films with lasting impact and meaningful value

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing underscored that it is necessary to take measures to eliminate the actions carried out through social networks and unethical media that undermine reli-

Artistes were urged to uphold national and ethnic interests based on their expertise in the arts through a national spirit for the benefit of the nation and its people.



Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla pose for documentary photo with the winners of the Lifetime Awards for Motion Pictures Achievement for 2024 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4

gion, national culture, and unity, mislead young people in their thoughts and beliefs, and weaken the attempts that could harm the nation's interests.

The Myanmar Motion Pictures Outstanding Award Presentation ceremony for 2024 took place at the Myanmar International Convention Centre I in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening, attended by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing who delivered an opening address and awarded the outstanding artistes.

The Senior General and his wife Daw

Kyu Kyu Hla viewed the documentary photos bearing motion pictures of outstanding award winners, films and outstanding artistes and technicians from 1952 to 2023 displayed along the entrance to the Jade Hall.

The Senior General opened the ceremony for 2024 by keeping an Academy Statue on the digital machine board.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General delivered an opening address. He said: Myanmar motion pictures, with their rich history spanning over 100 years, have not only entertained the public by

providing relaxation and a variety of artistic experiences across different eras but have also played a significant role in reflecting the nation's important affairs and real situations through art. As a result, it has fulfilled its responsibility to both the country and its people.

Film artistes played a role in inspiring patriotism and unity among ethnic communities during the struggle for independence. Through their artistic talents, they encouraged national spirit, cultural preservation, and solidarity. Even after independence, they continued to contribute to internal peace, national unity, and national development through their artistic endeavours.

Everybody must continuously strive to preserve and document valuable existing national cultural heritage as part of the world's cultural heritage for all of humanity. For the success of this endeavour, all citizens of Myanmar have to work together and contribute.

Salient points from the speech delivered by the Senior General at the Academy awarding ceremony

- 1. Everybody must continuously strive to preserve and document valuable existing national cultural heritage as part of the world's cultural heritage for all of humanity.
- 2. Artistes from all arenas have to contribute to the successful implementation of national peace, prosperity, development, and the achievement of goals.
- 3. A special request is made to ensure that Myanmar's traditions and customs do not fade or disappear, to prevent the influence of foreign cultures from overshadowing its own culture, and to preserve Myanmar's cultural identity without losing its essence.

NATIONAL

Artistes must craft films with lasting impact and meaningful value

FROM PAGE 3

The principles conveyed through an art form reflect a nation's cultural values, making motion pictures an extremely significant medium. As a fusion of art, craftsmanship, and technology, motion pictures possess a profound influence, subtly yet effectively touching the hearts and minds of the people, standing as a powerful form of media and a key instrument of soft power.

All film artistes have to create films that leave a lasting impact on people's hearts and bring meaningful benefits.

Through artistic expression, they have to aim to raise international awareness of Myanmar and people, fostering deeper connections and understanding seeking to use art as a means to spread knowledge and insights, ensuring that public thoughts and perspectives align with the nation's progress. Ultimately, these works must initiate collective participation from all citizens in nation-building through powerful and effective artistic works.

As the actions carried out through social networks and unethical media that undermine religion, national culture, and unity, mislead young people in their thoughts and beliefs, and weaken their morale are deliberate attempts that could harm the nation's interests, it is necessary to take measures to reduce and eliminate them.

Artistes from all arenas have to contribute to the successful implementation of national peace, prosperity, development, and the achievement of goals.

A special request is made to ensure that Myanmar's traditions and customs do not fade or disappear, to prevent the in-



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and his wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla view documentary photos bearing motion pictures outstanding award winners, films and outstanding artistes and technicians from 1952 to 2023 at Jade Hall of MICC I yesterday.

fluence of foreign cultures from overshadowing own culture, and to preserve Myanmar's cultural identity without losing its essence.

The Senior General also urged all to adapt harmoniously to the changing times while upholding national and ethnic interests based on their exper-

tise in the arts through a national spirit for the benefit of the nation and its people.

Chairman of the Myanmar Motion Pictures Organization Academy U Kyi Soe Tun spoke words of appreciation.

Receptionists of the academy awarding ceremony were introduced to the audiences, and

artistes from the MMPO and the National University of Arts and Culture presented a dancing performance with the song titled Myu-hmaung-way-kin.

Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn announced the winners of the Lifetime Awards for Motion Pictures Achievement for 2024.



This photo shows four Myanmar Academy Fashion Awards winners Yan Aung, Soe Moe Kyi, Chair of Judge Daw Swe Zin Htike, Nann Su Yati Soe and Htet Aung Shine.

The Senior General and his wife presented Lifetime Awards for Motion Pictures Achievement to veteran actor U Kyi Soe, veterans Academy director Maung Hnin Moe, Academy Wah Wah Win Shwe and Academy Khin Than Nu who spoke words of appreciation.

At the announcement of Film Academy Awards for the year 2024, the Best film award was handed to the film 'Chitthuthar Pantapwint Phytikhehlyin' produced by Taurus V Production, the Best cinematography award to Kaung Zan from the film 'Chitthuthar Pantapwint Phytikhehlyin', the Best film music award to Di Ra Mo from the film 'Eainmet Karyan', the Best Film Sound Award to Aung Myo Myat and Ye Win from the film 'Mee', the Best Film Editing Award to Arkar Kyaw from the film 'Hnaung', the Best Film Script Award to Aye Thiri Ko from the film 'Tein Pachi' and the special award to makeup performer Lon Lon (Linkadipa).

Myanmar Academy Fashion Awards for 2024 were presented to Yan Aung, Soe Moe Kyi, Htet Aung Shine and Nann Su Yati Soe.

The Best Director Award was presented to Win Lwin Htet from film 'Eainmet Karyan', the Best Supporting Actress Award to Chuu Lay from the film 'Bodaw Kin', the Best Supporting Actor Award to Aye Chan Maung from the film 'Mee', the Best Actress Award to Wut Hmon Shwe Yi from the film 'Tein Pachi', and the Best Actor Award to Nay Toe from the film 'Hnaung'.

Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn and veteran Academy award winner artistes presented gold statues for Academy Award to relevant winners.

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Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.
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NATIONAL

FROM PAGE 4

During the ceremony, artists from MMPO, Myanmar Music Association and Myanmar Theatrical Association performed songs and dances.

The Senior General and his wife cordially greeted intellectuals, intelligentsia and artistes from motion picture, literary, theatrical and music arenas.

Also present at the ceremony were Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, wife of the Senior General, the Council Joint Secretary, council members and their wives, union-level dignitaries, Union ministers and their wives, regional and state chief ministers, senior Tatmadaw officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, the commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, deputy ministers, patrons, the chair and members of MMPO, officials from Myanmar Motion Pictures Assessment Board, Myanmar Theatrical Association, Myanmar Music Association (Central), Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar Comedian's Association, interna-



SAC Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing cordially greets Academy award winners for 2024.



Best film music award winner Di Ra Mo.



Best Director Award winner Win Lwin Htet.



Best Actor Award winner Nay Toe.



Best Supporting Actor Award winner Aye Chan Maung.



Best Actress Award winner Wut Hmon Shwe Yi.



Best Supporting Actress Award winner Chuu Lay.



Best Cinematography award winner Kaung Zan.



Special award winner makeup performer Lon Lon (Linkadipa).

tional organizations and guests. The Myanmar motion pictures which started in 1920 turn 105 years now. For the sake of improving standard of the Myanmar's motion pictures, the Myanmar Motion Pictures Assessment Board has been selecting and awarding outstanding artistes and technicians since 1952. This year's event was the 66th time in 73 years. — MNA/TTA

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NATIONAL

Chairman of NSPNC receives Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and party

A Member of the State Administration Council, Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Yar Pyae received a delegation led by the humanitarian leader and peace envoy Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Centre in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, Chairman of the National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and Indian humanitarian leader and peace envoy Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar had a friendly discussion on the implementation of Myanmar's



peace process. They also discussed Gurudev's experiences in mediating international conflicts, key issues of trust-building in the peace process, dialogue and mutual trust between conflicting parties, sufferings of all parties in conflicts, the importance of cooperation to achieve peace rather than blaming each other, and humanitarian aid to Myanmar. — MNA/TH

Member of the State Administration Council, Chairman of the NSPNC Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae meets humanitarian leader and peace envoy Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union-level MSME Expo to promote high-quality domestic and export-ready products

ACCORDING to the guidance of the Head of State, MSME businesses should not only meet domestic demands but also produce high-quality products suitable for export. In line with this directive and to encourage the emergence of high-quality new domestic MSME products, the Central Committee for the Development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises will hold the Union-level MSME Product Exhibition and Competition from 10 to 14 February.

The selection and awarding process will be led by Deputy Minister U Myint Soe, who serves as the chairman of the selection and awarding subcommittee. The competition is currently taking place at the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development from 7 to 9 February.

A total of 193 business owners from different states and regions are participating in the competition: 29 for the Micro-sized Product Award, 34 for the Small-sized Product Award, 28 for the Medi-



Chairman of the selection and awarding subcommittee Deputy Minister U Myint Soe observes a booth participating in the competition by the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development in Nay Pyi Taw.

um-sized Product Award, 35 for the One Region, One Product (OROP) Award, 25 cooperative societies for the Cooperative Manufacturing Performance Award, and 42 for the Small-Scale Handicraft and Industrial Product Award.

A total of 31 awards across six categories will be presented, and the winners will be announced at the awards ceremony on 14 February at the exhibition venue. — MNA/KN

Yangon to host EJU Exam in coming June

THE EJU (Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students) will take place in Yangon on 15 June 2025.

Applications for the exam will be accepted from 10 February 2025 to 6 March 2025 (from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm from Monday to Friday). Applications must be submitted to the Myanmar Association of Japanese Alumni (MAJA) Head Office in Yangon, located at 2B-(4), Snow Garden Housing, Thumingala Street, Thingangyun Township, or by calling 09-262602121. Applicants from Mandalay should submit their applications to the MAJA Office in Mandalay, located at Block 1, Unit 6, Mingala Man-

dalay, or by calling 09-255162533.

The available subjects for the EJU exam include Japanese as a Foreign Language, Science, and Mathematics for the Science combination and Japanese as a Foreign Language, Japan and the World and Mathematics for the Art combination.

Applicants must fill out the application forms accurately and submit them in person. Once submitted, information cannot be modified. Applicants will only be allowed to take the subjects they selected when applying, as confirmed by the Examination Organizing Committee and the Myanmar Japan Alumni Association. — Myo Min Thura/KZL

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NATIONAL

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar visits prominent sites in Nay Pyi Taw

A delegation led by Indian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the humanitarian leader and peace envoy, who is currently in Yangon travelled to Nay Pyi Taw by air yesterday morning. Upon their arrival, they were welcomed at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Aye Tun, members of the Nay Pyi Taw Council and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the afternoon, the Indian Gurudev visited the Myanmar Gems Museum in Nay Pyi Taw, where museum officials showcased various exhibits, including a jade replica of Uppatasanti Pagoda, the Myanmar’s largest pearl, high-quality raw jade stones and rare gemstones such as rubies and sapphires. During the visit, the Indian Gurudev signed the guestbook.

He also visited the Mara-vijaya Buddha Image located in the Buddha Park in Dekkhi-nathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw



A delegation led by humanitarian leader and peace envoy Indian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar poses for the commemorative group photo with Maravijaya Buddha Image at the background yesterday.

Council Area. At the site, officials explained the purpose of the sacred statue’s construction, and the various stages in successful carving of the Buddha image. A documentary video clip about the construction process was also shown. The delegation then paid homage to the Maravijaya

Buddha Image, offering flowers, sacred water and oil lamps. They also explored the Agga Dhipa-ti Sasana Beikman, as well as stone plaque chamber pagodas which keep the stone-inscribed Buddhist scriptures that feature Pali script and Romanized text on marble slabs.

They visited the Uppatasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw, where they paid homage to the Buddha image inside the pagoda’s chamber; made floral and water offerings and donated funds. They also toured the White Elephant shed in the precinct of the pagoda, where they fed the white elephants.

In the evening, Union Minister U Tin Oo Lwin hosted a dinner in honour of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and his delegation at the M Gallery Hotel. Also present at the dinner were Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman U Than Tun Oo, deputy ministers, Nay Pyi Taw Council members and other officials. — MNA/KZL

“Pyoe Ooyin’ television series to premiere as a Mahar original



“Pyoe Ooyin” television series promotional poster.

THE television series “Pyoe Ooyin” (Nursery) will be aired as an original series on the Mahar application.

The script and storyline were written by Mai Khine, with screenplay adaptation by Zeyatu. The series has been directed by Assistant Director Win Myint Oo and Director Nay Thurein for Bo Bo Film Production.

Speaking about her role, actress Saung Wut Yee May

shared, “I play the role of a student named Yoon in this series. From the moment I accepted the offer, I felt like I was revisiting my childhood, a time that can never return. Acting alongside familiar faces like U Yan Lay and Aunty May Than Nu made the experience even more comfortable. I invite all our Mahar audience to watch and support this series. This is my third collaboration with Mahar.”

The cast include Academy Award winners Yan Aung and May Than Nu, along with Min Phone Myat, Teza Lin Yaung, Min Tawwin, Myo Ko Kyaw, Ye Yint Sithu, Aung Lwin Moe, Dipa Kyaw, Pyi Nyein Han, Saung Wut Yee May, Than Thar Nyi, Chue Sit Han, Yoon Wint Hlwa Aung, Honey Zaw, Tartar, Pyae Pyae Phone Myat, Phu Phu Nantaw, and many other artistes. — ASH/KNN

Sai Sai Kham Leng, May La Than Zin to perform live in Yangon

ACADEMY singer Sai Sai Kham Leng and singer May La Than Zin will hold a live music performance at ARENA Entertainment Bar in Mayan-gon Township, Yangon, on 14 February.

The event will begin at 5 pm, featuring live performances by

the singers with musical support from the ARENA band.

Sai Sai Kham Leng stated, “I will be performing at ARENA Entertainment on 14 February alongside May La Than Zin. We will be singing a selection of songs that we can perform together.” — ASH/KZL

Top websites and web portals to access Military Service Rules

- 1. Ministry of Defence
<https://www.mod.gov.mm>
- 2. Ministry of Legal Affairs
<https://www.mlis.gov.mm>
- 3. Ministry of Information
<https://www.moi.gov.mm>
- 4. Myawady Webportal
<https://myawady.net.mm>
- 5. Myanmar National Portal
<https://myanmar.gov.mm>

Consider the lives of innocent children in armed conflicts

ANY armed conflicts never bring benefits to society. It is true. It can be fully defined that armed conflicts as well as any conflicts will never bring advantages to society except for some occurrences of conflicts to initiate the valuable reform processes with positive attitudes.

As such, it can be generally said that everybody needs to avoid and prevent different forms of conflicts whether or not based on the armed struggle line. It is because all kinds of armed conflicts with or without positive attitudes leave disadvantages of armed struggle lines, causing casualties of innocent people as well as children. Particularly, the lives of children who can

rely on the future of the State would go with the wind of the deadly occurrences in armed conflicts. These children are unable to attack, disturb and destroy any other.

That is why those on any side who trigger the armed conflicts need to consider the future lives of innocent children. Hence, they should consider whether children deserve to lose their lives in any form of conflict based on political, social, economic, dogmatic and ethnic issues committed by adults who see themselves with their actions as serving the interests of relevant groups.

others, especially to children not to suffer bad impacts of armed conflicts.

In Myanmar, peace is reachable for all. Everybody wishes to enjoy the fruits of peace but a question should be raised for them to accept peace. Peace must be initiated without limit. Any adults whenever they do anything must avoid side effects which can harm others. Peace should not be initiated for personal gain. All stakeholders in forging peace have always to consider the life and limb losses of innocent people. Hence, they should consider: If innocent children lose their lives and limbs in armed conflicts, what will be the future strength of the nation? Consequently, who will take responsibility for children with disabilities affected by armed conflicts? Will the consequences of armed conflicts be useful for the nation?

IT'S been a while! Bonne Année et Bonne Santé!

Let's have another round of calling out these self-absorbed people (SAP) from the ivory towers in Geneva and New York the way they deserve it.

Successive "Envoys" have made the pilgrimage to Davos! The last one did it. This current has done it too! While they are at it, they might want to sip a cup of coffee (maybe fine French wine in their case!!!) with their other predecessor; who is a national. All three were appointed not based on merits because their master in New York makes appointments based on DEI. So what do the Myanmar people get? One disaster after another. Two predecessors ago was a lightweight, who had no clue! The recent past one was a "has been and washed up" who was not on anyone's list, but used the role as the Envoy to travel to Davos. Then the current made it to Davos last month, supposedly to meet with some Asian/ASEAN leaders. Seriously? These Asian leaders are in the region. A trip to ten ASEAN capitals would be equivalent to one round trip (business class of course!!!) to Davos. But no, it had to be Davos! There they could also promote their services to other poten-

Envoys go to Davos

By Kyaw Myint Tun (Paris)



The United Nations building in New York City. PHOTO : WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

tial employers. They don't go to Davos with the singular objective of making the lives of Myanmar people better. The global elite that roam Davis one week a year are as far away from the affairs of Myanmar as possible. Let's be real!

No wonder conflicts don't get solved. People should note the comment by their biggest Uncle this week when the comment was made that the place has tremendous potential but they don't solve a thing. So true! What conflict have they solved in the last 20 years? In recent memory?

Democratic Republic of Congo is in flames! Goma has fallen. Goma, where they have the largest mission! These ever-self-righteous people from Geneva and New York have been at DRC since the mid-90s! DRC has been on the tip of their tongue! Look what has happened to DRC

Researchers find out way to prevent childhood brain tumour: Study



The team identified a protein, OLIG2, that activates 'sleeping' stem cells, driving tumour formation and regrowth in sonic hedgehog (SHH) medulloblastoma. ILLUSTRATION: PIX FOR VISUAL PURPOSE/ CONCEPT ART

SCIENTISTS at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) have discovered a way to prevent tumour growth in a subtype of medulloblastoma, the most prevalent children's malignant brain cancer.

Brain cancer presents a unique set of challenges for researchers because by the time a person develops symptoms, the tumours are sometimes so complicated that the fundamental mechanisms driving tumour growth are no longer easily identifiable. A research team led by Dr Peter Dirks is aiming to overcome this obstacle for sonic hedgehog (SHH) medulloblastoma.

In a new study, the researchers identify that a protein is responsible for the waking up of 'sleeping' stem cells and driving SHH medulloblastoma tumour formation and regrowth. By block-

ing this protein and preventing the stem cells from waking, the study demonstrates what could be a pivotal treatment strategy for the cancer, utilising cutting-edge genomic approaches in combination with functional experiments in a preclinical model.

"Our findings offer a novel strategy to target cancer stem cells, providing hope for more effective treatments against aggressive brain tumors," says Dirks, Senior Scientist in the Developmental, Stem Cell & Cancer Biology programme and Chief of the Division of Neurosurgery.

The research team began by examining cellular transitions that drove the development of SHH medulloblastoma tumours. They found that early in tumour development and after conventional treatments, a protein called OLIG2 would activate 'sleeping'

stem cells, causing them to divide and grow into a tumour.

"There is order to how the cancer initiating stem cells undergo fate changes to form tumours. We can target an early transition event and intercept the entire process – essentially stopping the cancer in its earliest form," says first author Dr Kinjal Desai, a postdoctoral researcher in the Dirks lab.

During these transitions, the researchers uncovered a key window during which tumour progression could be blocked. By combining a previously established treatment with a small molecule called CT-179, which disrupts the OLIG2 protein, the research team were able to target the residual stem cells left after treatment and prevent them from re-awakening, effectively preventing tumour relapse.

Similarly for early-stage SHH medulloblastoma, CT-179 prevented the tumour from forming and significantly increased survival rates in the preclinical model.

Together with additional preclinical models in a study published simultaneously in Nature Communications from colleagues at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Australia, the findings showcase what could be an effective new treatment for SHH medulloblastoma, as well as other brain cancers including diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG).

The study complements recent research from the Dirks Lab in Nature, which describes the early stages of glioblastoma development. While future research will expand these findings into clinical trials for patients, particularly

under their watch.

Then there's Sudan. They have been in the country for decades. Under their watch, a civil war has erupted. More than 11 million people are internally displaced and more than three million, mostly women and children have fled the country. What have they done for Sudan?

Then there is "the Court", which has been sanctioned by their biggest Uncle. If it were, Myanmar or Burkina Faso or other small developing country, they would throw every kitchen sink in their arsenal to bring the country to its knees. But when it comes to their biggest.

Uncle, they can't and don't do a thing. The court has not been able to carry out one particular warrant in Sudan that was issued long ago. Aren't they so successful? Oh, how about that transparent "internal" sexual harassment investigation?

A Western journalist who is based in that ivory tower in New York reported how all's quiet with these self-absorbing officials in the ivory tower in New York, in light of one order after another coming from their biggest Uncle.

No one even dares to make any comment. These SAPs never stay quiet. But when faced with the very strong Uncle, they tuck their

tail in! OMG!

For Myanmar, don't let these people come in and preach. Solve the internal problems with domestic means. These SAPs don't solve anything. Their biggest Uncle has said so! There is logic to not solving conflicts and instead prolonging them.

Their consultancy goes on and on! Myanmar beware. When things get better in the country, they will push for some "Blue Ribbon" Commission, "Truth and Reconciliation" Commission, etc. They will come in preaching DEI (Diverse, Equity, and Inclusion) programmes must be given the priority. They are good at these things. All that is for their own interest, not for the citizens of Myanmar.

Let's shout out to one high and mighty SAP who showed up in Karen camps in military fatigue. Let's wear a military fatigue to look tough! Since it's been a while, he might show up again to keep his consultancy afloat. He makes living of two countries: Myanmar and a neighbouring one. The biggest Uncle is ending all these free handouts to all those so-called "consultancies". Bonne chance!

(The opinions and views expressed in this article are solely those of the author).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Scientists at SickKids have discovered a way to prevent tumour growth in a subtype of medulloblastoma, a common brain cancer in children.
- The team, led by Dr Peter Dirks, identified a protein, OLIG2, that activates 'sleeping' stem cells, driving tumour formation and regrowth in sonic hedgehog (SHH) medulloblastoma.
- By blocking this protein with a molecule called CT-179, they were able to prevent tumour relapse and significantly increase survival rates in preclinical models.
- This research offers a potential new treatment strategy for SHH medulloblastoma and other aggressive brain cancers.

SCI/ENVIRON:
WORLD

UK MPs warn billions spent on carbon capture may hit bills

Three-quarters of the £22 billion will come from “levies on consumers,” who are already facing high energy bills.

BRITISH MPs on Friday called on the government to assess the impact on energy bills of its multibillion-pound investment into “risky” technology to capture and store carbon.

The Labour government plans to invest nearly £22 billion (\$27 billion) to develop carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS), to help Britain reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

But the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee raised concerns, saying the “government’s backing of unproven, first-of-a-kind technology to reach net zero is high-risk.”

Three quarters of the £22 billion will come from “levies on consumers who are already facing some of the highest energy bills in the world,” the cross-par-

ty committee said.

The committee found that the financial impact on households had not been examined by the government nor was there a provision to ensure consumers benefit from lower energy bills.

The “policy is going to have a very significant effect on consumers and industry’s electricity bills,” said chair of the committee, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown.

CCUS is a technology that seeks to eliminate emissions created by burning fuels for energy and from industrial processes.

The carbon is captured and stored permanently in various underground environments.

A government spokesperson said the technology is “vital to boost our energy independence.”



The Northern Lights Carbon Capture and Storage base in Norway that has been visited by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

“There is no route to protecting jobs in our industrial heartlands and securing the future of heavy industry in the UK without it,” the spokesperson added. — AFP

Lula pushes mega-oil project as Brazil prepares to host COP30



People carry drinking water along a sandbank of Madeira River in the village of Paraizinho, in Amazonas state, northern Brazil, on 7 September 2024. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

BRAZIL’S president this week amped up pressure for a major oil project to go ahead at the mouth of the Amazon River, despite criticism from environmentalists as the country prepares to host UN climate talks in November.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, 79, aspires to make Brazil a leader in the fight against global warming, but has fiercely defended oil ex-

ploration as key to the growth of Latin America’s biggest economy.

“We want oil because it will be around for a long time,” Lula said Wednesday, arguing that the windfall from the black gold should be used “to finance the energy transition, which will be very expensive.”

He was speaking as Brazil’s environmental protection agency IBAMA, an auton-

mous public body, is mulling whether to grant state-owned oil giant Petrobras an exploration license in an offshore area known as the Equatorial Margin.

That maritime area extends over 350,000 square kilometers (135,000 square miles) across northern Brazil and lies some 500 kilometres (310 miles) from the mouth of the Amazon River. — AFP

Harsh winter claims 7,500 head of livestock in Mongolia so far this winter

APPROXIMATELY 7,500 livestock have perished in Mongolia so far this winter due to extreme cold weather, locally known as “dzud,” local media reported on Saturday, citing the State Emergency Commission (SEC).

“Nearly 7,500 head of livestock have so far perished due to the dzud across the country,” the SEC said in a statement.

Dzud is a Mongolian term referring to a severe winter in which large numbers of livestock perish because the ground is frozen or

covered in snow, preventing them from grazing. At least 30 soums (administrative subdivisions) in 10 provinces are currently experiencing the dzud, while 55 soums in 16 provinces are facing near-dzud conditions, according to the emergency agency.

As of the end of January, nearly 80 per cent of Mongolia’s territory was covered in snow, with depths reaching up to 60 cm, the National Agency for Meteorology and Environmental Monitoring has reported. — Xinhua

Scientists find whale song, human language share same structure

INTERNATIONAL scientists have found that whale noises and songs share the same structure with human language.

The scientists analyzed the groans, moans, whistles, barks, shrieks and squeaks in humpback whale song recordings collected over eight years in New Caledonia in the South Pacific.

“Their noises and our words share a common pattern,” said

Emma Carroll, a marine biologist at the University of Auckland and an expert in whale genetics, adding the finding is “something truly fascinating.”

This doesn’t mean whales have language, but it could point to similarities in how two evolutionarily distant species’ communication systems have evolved and how they are learned, Carroll said. — Xinhua

Rare Stradivarius violin sells for \$11.3 mln at Sotheby's

A rare Stradivarius violin, made over 300 years ago by Antonio Stradivari during his so-called golden period, fetched \$11.3 million at auction in New York on Friday, Sotheby's said.

"This extraordinary violin represents the pinnacle of craftsmanship and classical music history, its unparalleled sound and storied provenance captivating collectors and musicians alike," Sotheby's chair Mari-Claudia Jimenez said in a statement.

It said the buyer chose to remain anonymous.

Known for its extraordinary sound, the "Joachim-Ma Stradivarius," named after its distinguished former owners, became the third most-expensive musical instrument ever sold at auction.

The most-expensive record

belongs to another Stradivarius, the "Lady Blunt," which sold was sold in 2011 for \$15.9 million.

"What sets the Joachim-Ma Stradivarius apart is its exceptional sound — rich, complex, and full of depth," the auction house said.

The instrument belonged to the celebrated Chinese violinist and pedagogue Si-Hon Ma, who before his death in 2009 donated the violin to his alma mater, the New England Conservatory in Boston, on condition that some day it sell the violin to fund scholarships.

Before that, the violin belonged to the 19th century Hungarian virtuoso Joseph Joachim, who was famous for his collaborations with composers such as Johannes Brahms. — AFP



Classical US violinist Stefan Jackiw plays the Joachim-Ma Stradivarius violin during a preview of the violin's auction at Sotheby's in New York City on 3 February 2025. PHOTO: AFP

'Anora' wins top Hollywood producer and director prizes

Director Sean Baker, known for his indie work, expressed surprise at the recognition, thanking his producers for managing to make the \$6 million film in New York City.



'Anora,' a black comedy about an erotic dancer's whirlwind-romance-gone-wrong, won multiple prizes. PHOTO: AFP

"ANORA" was named the best film of the year by Hollywood's directors and producers on Saturday, cementing its new status as the film to beat at the upcoming Oscars.

The black comedy from director Sean Baker, about an erotic dancer's whirlwind romance gone wrong, picked up the prestigious Directors Guild of America and Producers Guild of America top awards, just a day after capturing the

foremost US critics' prize.

"My imposter syndrome is skyrocketing right now!" said Baker, a 53-year-old indie director, previously best known in arthouse circles for his empathetic portrayals of life in US subcultures, as he accepted his prize at a swanky Beverly Hills DGA gala.

Baker thanked his producers for being "able to pull off a \$6 million film, shot on film, in New York City in 2023 — almost

impossible."

"Anora" won the Cannes film festival top prize Palme d'Or back in May, yet had more recently lagged behind other films including "Emilia Perez" in terms of Oscar nominations.

Besides Saturday's coup, "Anora" also won best picture at the Critics Choice Awards on Friday, propelling it as a renewed favorite for the Academy Awards — which will take place on 2 March. — AFP

Sweden plans stricter gun laws, school security after shooting

THE Swedish government has announced plans to tighten firearm regulations and enhance school security following a deadly school shooting in Orebro.

The tragic event raises pressing concerns about gun legislation, according to a government statement on Friday. The statement stressed the need for stricter measures in the wake of the violence.

The shooting occurred at noon on Tuesday at Risbergska Skolan, an educational center primarily for adults in central Sweden, leaving 11 people dead.

It was the first school shooting in Sweden since 1961. While previous incidents of fatal school violence have oc-



curred, they were mainly carried out with knives, Swedish media reported.

As part of broader security reforms, Swedish Minister for Schools Lotta Edholm proposed new laws requiring schools to keep doors locked and called for mandatory emergency training.

Meanwhile, the government is considering fast-tracking legislation to allow the installation of surveillance cameras in schools, according to Minister for Justice Gunnar Strommer. Swedish Television (SVT) reported on Saturday that the ruling parties, which had previously opposed banning semi-automatic weapons, have now reversed their stance following the tragedy. — Xinhua

ECON:
WORLD

Saudi Arabia to showcase kingdom's transformation at Osaka Expo 2025



Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Japan Ghazi Binzagr speaks to Kyodo News in an interview in Hyogo Prefecture on 15 January 2025.

PHOTO: KYODO

SAUDI Arabia's pavilion at the 2025 World Exposition in Osaka will offer visitors a window into how the kingdom is evolving beyond oil dependency while preserving its cultural heritage, the country's ambassador to Japan said.

"What's exciting for Saudi Arabia is to have a comprehensive transformation that involves not just the economy, but culture, life, and the environment," Saudi Ambassador Ghazi Binzagr, who also serves as commissioner general of his country's Osaka expo exhibitions, said in a recent interview.

Designed by British ar-

chitecture company Foster and Partners, the pavilion will highlight Saudi Arabia's diverse landscape from green mountains to coral reefs, he added.

"What the visitor will experience is a taste of what it's like to have a country in the middle of a transformation," the ambassador said.

Saudi Arabia is one of around a dozen countries setting up a so-called "Type A" self-built pavilion, considered the highlight of the expo.

The pavilion's structure embodies the country's transformation, featuring sustainable elements like solar panels along

Saudi Arabia aims for a comprehensive transformation, focusing on the economy, culture, life, and the environment, says Ambassador Ghazi Binzagr.

with cutting-edge technology, including artificial intelligence and virtual reality experiences, according to Saudi officials.

It draws on the architecture in the country's traditional villages, designed to lead visitors through a forecourt planted with Saudi Arabian flora and narrow streets to the courtyard where performances and events will be held, according to Foster and Partners.

The structure's cladding is made from lightweight Saudi stone and can be deconstructed and reassembled, or reconfigured, for use in a future location. — Kyodo

Record gold prices both boon and burden for London jewellers

IN London's Hatton Garden jewellery quarter, stores have raised their iron shutters to welcome a motley crew of buyers and sellers, as the price of gold reaches record highs.

"I know that whatever they offer me first, I'm going to say no," joked Jennifer Lyle, who had come to sell an old gold bracelet and single earring, after recently losing her job.

Lyle, 30, recounted how just a day earlier she had watched a television show in which a woman who bought a gold coin in 1996 for £60 found it was now worth £550 (\$676).

"That's a good increase, isn't it?" Lyle said joyfully.

The price of gold struck 40 record highs last year as global demand reached an all-time peak of 4,974 tonnes, the World Gold Council (WGC) said in a recent annual report.

The record run has extended into 2025, with gold striking a record high close to \$2,900 an ounce on Friday.

Central banks are purchasing gold in big quantities amid geopolitical and economic uncertainty, with the precious metal regarded as a safe haven investment. — AFP



Gold bracelets displayed in a London shop as rising gold prices attract both buyers and sellers. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

BRIEF: ECON

Indonesia's manufacturing sector kicks off 2025 with strong growth

INDONESIA, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, started 2025 with a solid performance in the manufacturing industry, posting an increase in the Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) to 51.9.

The rise signals positive business growth and confidence.

The January PMI level was the highest since June 2024, driven by increased production and new demand from both domestic and export markets, according to the country's ministry of finance.

Febrio Nathan Kacaribu, head of the fiscal policy agency at the ministry, said that the positive development in the manufacturing sector aligned with the expansion of consumption and business activities since the end of 2024. The expansion was evidenced by the higher Real Retail Sales Index in December 2024, which showed a 1.0 per cent year-on-year increase and was 0.9 per cent higher than November's growth, according to data from Bank Indonesia. The central bank also reported that Indonesia's Consumer Confidence Index remained in the expansive zone, reaching 127.7, up from 125.9 in November 2024. — Xinhua

Egg shortage cracks wallets, scrambles food businesses across California

A severe egg shortage is gripping California and the western United States as a deadly avian flu



This photo taken with a mobile phone on 7 February 2025 shows a customer shopping for eggs at a Walmart in El Monte, Los Angeles County, California, the United States. PHOTO: ZENG HUI/XINHUA

outbreak continues to decimate poultry flocks, driving egg prices to record highs and forcing food businesses to adapt their operations.

The price for cage-free large white eggs reached US\$8.65 per dozen in California when delivered wholesale, while organic brown eggs were sold at US\$9.39 per dozen, said the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Daily National Shell Egg Index Report on Friday.

The report shows that egg prices in California have more than doubled since 2024.

Beth, a Bay Area resident who gave only her first name, shared her recent struggles with egg shopping. "I checked several grocery stores in my neighborhood, but eggs were either sold out or too expensive," she told Xinhua on Friday.

A trip to a Costco store proved fruitless, with empty shelves greeting her as well. Store staff advised her to return early in the morning to improve her chances. — Xinhua

Chinese high-end brand JUZUI shines at New York Fashion Week

JUZUI Chairman Zheng Anzheng called New York Fashion Week a defining moment, emphasizing their commitment to global Chinese fashion excellence.

LIGHTING up the New York Fashion Week stage, Chinese high-end brand JUZUI returned to the runway with its breathtaking Fall/Winter 2025 collection, “Winter Blooms Whispering,” captivating audiences at the Glasshouse in New York City on Friday.

Maye Musk closed the show with her signature poise, embodying the collection’s message of timeless elegance and

resilience.

JUZUI’s Chairman and President Zheng Anzheng described the event as a defining moment for the brand’s global aspirations, saying, “Our participation in New York Fashion Week reaffirms our commitment to bringing high-quality Chinese fashion to the international stage.”

Chief Designer Taoray Wang highlighted the col-

lection’s inspirations, explaining, “With ‘Winter Blooms Whispering,’ we sought to reflect the strength and beauty of women who, like winter blooms, thrive against all odds.”

The collection seamlessly continues JUZUI’s signature floral-inspired theme, following its celebrated previous collections, “Full Bloom” (Fall/Winter 2024) and “Florif-

erous” (Spring/Summer 2025). This season’s designs exude sophistication and resilience, embracing the narrative of a modern Chinese woman who flourishes with grace, even in cold winter. — Xinhua

A model presents a creation of JUZUI during the New York Fashion Week 2025 in New York City, the United States, on 7 February 2025. PHOTO: JUZUI/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA



This aerial photo taken on 24 December 2023 shows the scenery near the Nusa Dua Beach in Bali, a famous tourist destination of Indonesia. PHOTO: XU QIN/XINHUA

Indonesia sees significant tourism growth in 2024

INDONESIA welcomed 13.9 million foreign tourists in 2024, marking a significant increase from the 11.68 million visitors recorded in 2023, the Ministry of Tourism announced in a press release on Saturday.

Tourism Minister Widiyanti Putri attributed this achievement to the effective policies implemented during President Prabowo Subianto’s first 100 days in office. “In the first 100 working days, the

government has successfully maintained the growth in the number of foreign tourists, which continues to increase compared to the same period in 2023,” said Putri in the press release. She added that the

stable political and social conditions in Indonesia, coupled with its diverse nature-based tourism offerings, have made the country a safe and attractive destination for international visitors. — Xinhua

Sri Lanka to plant 2.5 mln coconut trees in 2025

SRI Lanka’s Coconut Cultivation Board has set a target of planting 2.5 million coconut plants in 2025, said an official on Sunday. Chairman of the Coconut Cultivation Board Sunimal Jayakody told local media that they will re-organize regional coconut cultivation societies from 17 February to set the foundation for cultivation expansion. He said 1 million coconut plants, out of the 2.5 million, will be cultivated in the Northern Coconut Triangle, the main

coconut cultivation area in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka used to produce about 3 billion coconuts each year; however, in the last few years, the yield has dropped to around 2.85 billion, according to official statistics. The decrease is mainly due to issues related to care and maintenance, climate change, and various diseases and pest infestations, Chairman of the Coconut Development Authority Shantha Ranathunga told the media earlier. — Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SITC ZHI VOY.NO. (2502S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SITC ZHI VOY.NO. (2502S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **10-2-2025** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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ROLLING UPDATES
WORLD

Philippine vice pres. rules out resigning, impeachment trial looms

Duterte denied threatening President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. with assassination during her first press conference since the impeachment.

PHILIPPINE Vice President Sara Duterte on Friday ruled out resigning for now as she prepares to face an impeachment trial, two days after the lower house of Congress endorsed the move against her over an alleged death threat against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and misuse of public funds.

The 46-year-old daughter of Marcos’s predecessor Rodrigo Duterte, in her first press conference since the House of Representatives impeached, also denied having threatened to have the president, her erstwhile ally, assassinated.

In November, she told an online news conference she had contracted an assassin to kill Marcos, his wife and House Speaker Martin Romualdez, who is the president’s cousin, in the event she herself were killed.

In Friday’s press conference, Duterte said her legal team for the impeachment trial in the Senate may include her father.

If her impeachment is endorsed by the upper house, Duterte would be removed from the No 2 post and disqualified from public service.

She also told the press that she is considering running in the 2028 presidential election. — Kyodo



Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte speaks during a press conference in Manila on 7 February 2025. PHOTO: KYODO

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lebanon government named after two-year caretaker cabinet

LEBANON’S presidency announced on Saturday that a new government had been formed, ending more than two years of an interim cabinet.

Lebanon’s prime minister named a new government on Saturday, the presidency announced, with the weakening of long-dominant Hezbollah bringing to a close a two-year period of rule by caretaker authorities.

Premier Nawaf Salam said he hoped to head a “government of reform and salvation”, pledging to rebuild trust with the international community after a devastating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, and years of economic collapse blamed on corruption and mismanagement. — AFP

Bengaluru gears up for Aero India 2025; Preparations in full swing

THE stage is set for Aero India 2025, Asia’s top aerospace exhibition, which is scheduled to take place from February 10 to 14 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru.

The 15th edition of the biennial event promises to be a spectacular showcase of the latest advancements in aerospace technology. Preparations are in full swing.

One of the highlights of the show is the Combat Air Teaming System (CATS) Warrior, a full-scale engineering demonstrator that is on display at the India Pavilion. The CATS Warrior is a cutting-edge system that is designed to enhance the combat capabilities of the Indian Air Force.

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is set to take centre stage at Aero India 2025, showcasing its indigenous products and technologies at the India Pavilion, said the state-owned aerospace and defence company. — ANI

Hamas says Israel withdraws from key Gaza road



Displaced Palestinians cross the Netzarim corridor as they make their way to the northern parts of the Gaza Strip on 9 February 2025. The Israeli military completed its withdrawal from the Netzarim Corridor on a key highway in Gaza on 9 February 2025, as part of an ongoing ceasefire deal, a Hamas official told AFP. PHOTO: EYAD BABA / AFP

ISRAELI forces withdrew from the strategic Netzarim Corridor in Gaza on Sunday as part of a fragile ceasefire deal with

Hamas, allowing traffic to resume on a key road linking the territory’s north and south.

A Hamas official said Israeli troops completed their withdrawal on Sunday from a strategic road cutting through the Gaza Strip, part of a fragile truce deal that Israel said it was implementing.

“Israeli forces have dismantled their positions and military posts and completely withdrawn their tanks from the Netzarim Corridor on Salaheddin Road, allowing vehicles to pass freely in both directions,” an official from the Hamas-run interior ministry said.

AFP journalists saw no troops in the area Sunday as cars, buses, pickup trucks and donkey carts travelled along the road from both the north and south, crossing the Netzarim Corridor where an Israeli checkpoint used to stand.

According to a senior Hamas official, the Israeli withdrawal from Netzarim had been scheduled for Sunday under the terms of a truce that took effect on 19 January after more than 15 months of war. — AFP

Musk criticises US govt payment systems, highlights alleges USD 100 billion “fraud” annually

ELON Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, on Sunday voiced strong concerns about the US government’s payment systems, revealing troubling ‘inefficiencies’ and potential ‘fraud’ worth over USD 100 billion every year. In a

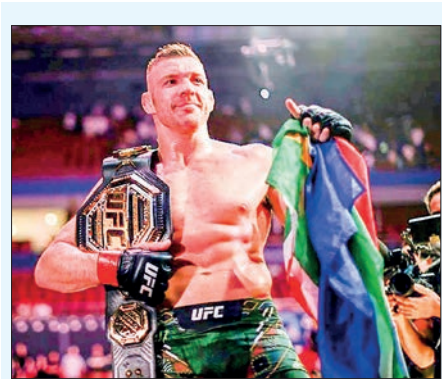
post on X, Musk said that the Treasury Department and his Department of Government Efficiency have reached an agreement changing reporting requirements for all outgoing government payments.

The government payments will now have a ‘payment categorization code’ for auditing purposes, he wrote in a post on X.

Highlighting key reforms that need to be implemented, he stated, “Require

that all outgoing government payments have a payment categorization code, which is necessary in order to pass financial audits. This is frequently left blank, making audits almost impossible.” — ANI

SPORTS



South Africa's Dricus du Plessis celebrates his victory over Sean Strickland in the UFC middleweight title bout. **PHOTO: AFP**

Du Plessis batters Strickland to retain UFC middleweight crown

SOUTH African Dricus du Plessis defended his UFC middleweight belt on Sunday with a unanimous win over bitter rival Sean Strickland, destroying his opponent's nose in a bloody title fight in Sydney.

The 31-year-old won 50-45, 50-45, 49-46 to boost his win-loss record to 23-2 and cement his status as mixed martial arts' top 185-pound fighter.

Du Plessis first claimed the belt when he beat Strickland via a close split decision in Toronto in January last year, a bout the polarising American repeatedly insisted he won.

The South African launched a successful defence against Nigeria-born Israel Adesanya in August, while Strickland rebounded with a tepid defeat of Brazil's Paulo Costa to set up the re-match.

"To come in here and try to knock this man out it is next to impossible," said Du Plessis, the first South African to win a UFC championship. "I'd love another round, but that's not the game.

"I wanted a submission, a knockout or an absolute domination of a five rounder," he added. "That's what I gave. I gave it my all."

The Toronto clash was decided by the smallest of margins, but this time it was all Du Plessis.

In a measured start he utilised his favoured head kicks, landing four in round one as Strickland responded with tentative jabs.

The volume of strikes increased in round two with Du Plessis delivering combinations to the face that drew blood as he picked up the pace.

Strickland lacked urgency and Du Plessis rammed home the advantage in a dominant round four.

A huge right hook saw blood come pouring from the American's nose, and another rocked him onto the cage. — AFP

Rakhine United bags crucial win in MNL

RAKHINE United defeated Thitsar Arman 3-1 in the 19th fixture of the 2024-2025 Myanmar National League season at Thuwunna Youth Training Centre in Yangon yesterday.

Rakhine United struggling in the relegation zone claimed the win with a hat-trick from striker M'Baga. Despite the victory, Rakhine United remains in the relegation battle and needs to push for more points in their final three matches. Thitsar Arman, which took the lead early, conceded three goals and lost the match.

Both teams featured most of their key players. However, Rakhine United faced challenges due to injuries and suspensions. The first half ended without a goal, but Aung Htun Htun put Thitsar



Rakhine United and Thitsar Arman compete during the Myanmar National League match. **PHOTO:MNL**

Arman ahead early in the second half. M'Baga equalized for Rakhine United in the 64th minute and scored two more goals in the 82nd and 88th minutes. M'Baga was named the best player of the match.

After the match, Thitsar Arman has 17 points from 19 games, while Rakhine United has 10 points from 19 games. The Fixture 19 continues today with Maha United facing Thitsar Arman. — Ko Nyi Lay/KZL



Gold medalist Wu Yu (C) of China, silver medalist Liu Hanbin (L) of China and bronze medalist Hanahati Muhamaiti of China pose during the awarding ceremony for the men's 5000m match of the speed skating event at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, 9 February 2025. **PHOTO: CHEN ZHENHAI/XINHUA**

China sweeps speed skating men's 5,000m podium, double joy for Kim at Harbin AWG

WU Yu won the gold medal as Chinese speed skaters swept men's 5,000m podium at the Harbin 2025 Asian Winter Games (AWG) here on Sunday.

The men's 5,000m victory added to the three gold medals won by Chinese skaters in the Speed Skating Oval of the Heilongjiang Ice Training Center on Saturday, further consolidating China's leading position on the medal tally of the sport after two competition days.

The rest of the three gold medals

so far on offer were all taken by South Korean skaters, with Kim Min-sun bagging two from women's 500m and team sprint on Sunday.

In the men's 5,000m competition, Liu Hanbin, in the fourth pair, was the fastest in six minutes and 29.93 seconds before Wu and Muhamaiti Hanahati stepped on ice in the final pairing.

Wu, despite a comparatively slow start, skated to 6:27.82 to win the gold medal, and Hanahati was third in 6:31.54. — Xinhua

Japan claims second alpine skiing gold at Harbin Asian Winter Games

JAPAN bagged both alpine skiing gold medals after Takayuki Koyama won the men's slalom at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Yabuli on Sunday.

In the first run, Koyama finished second in 44.83 seconds. In the second run, the Japanese athlete topped the rankings with a time of 43.29 seconds and finally won in one minute and 28.12 seconds overall.

Defending champion Jung Dong-hyun of South Korea took the silver with 0.97 seconds behind, while Japan's Neo Kamada got the bronze 1.13 seconds adrift of the leader.

"The course of the second run is very speedy, I think more on speed and try to make my body warm enough, so I can turn the game around and win the competition," said Koyama.

"I was busy traveling in these days, I just arrived here two days ago, so I don't have time to take the official pro-game training. It was my honor to compete with Asian skiing legend Jung and I am very happy to win the title," the winner added.

China's national slalom champion Liu Xiaochen finished seventh and Chao Xinbo ranked ninth. Sun Xinmiao and Li Jinyang took the 13th and 15th place respectively. — Xinhua



Japan PM carries favour with Trump on economic front



Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba (L) holds talks with US President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington on 7 February 2025. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPANESE Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's first in-person meeting with US President Donald Trump ended without friction or conflicting remarks, potentially offering valuable insights for other world leaders navigating his vision for a new America.

Among the various topics discussed, bilateral economic cooperation aligned with Trump's priorities was arguably central to their hours-long talks, carefully orchestrated by Japanese officials. Ishiba's pledge to increase Japan's in-

vestment in the United States from about \$800 billion to \$1 trillion and boost liquefied natural gas purchases from the world's largest economy marked his initial effort to curry favor with Trump before building a personal relationship.

The summit aimed to strengthen Japan-US relations, with both leaders agreeing to a "new golden age" in their partnership.

More importantly, Japan's apparent strategy of keeping the focus on economic issues helped minimize the risk of disrupting the trajectory of the Tokyo-Washington alliance, which remains as strong as ever. In a symbolic move, a joint statement issued by Ishiba and Trump after their summit in Washington on Friday began with the first sentence declaring their agreement to pursue a "new golden age" in Japan-US relations.

At a joint press conference with Ishiba, Trump looked especially pleased to announce that Japan will begin importing US LNG in "record numbers," and the two countries will explore a joint venture of some type that has to do with Alaska oil and gas. "That's very exciting," Trump said.

"As we deepen our economic relationship, I made clear that the United States will be conducting trade with all countries based on the principle of fairness and reciprocity." Trump expressed his strong desire to slash the US trade deficit with Japan, but his tone was largely optimistic. — Kyodo

MODERN FACILITIES

Afghan authorities to build new town in N Afghanistan

AFGHAN authorities laid down the foundation stone of a township in northern Afghanistan's Kunduz province on Sunday. The proposed township, to be constructed on 35 acres of land within two years and costing 1.5 billion afghani (US\$20.28 million), would have modern facilities, including markets, schools, and health centers, the head of the construction company, Mawlawi Abdul Ghafoor Shahidzoi, said in his opening remarks. Launching the project would also create jobs for hundreds of people, he said. — Xinhua

WikiLeaks exposes Internews: USAID-funded media machine behind global influence

THE infamous US agency funneled nearly half a billion dollars to Internews Network, a non-profit deeply involved in media operations all over the world, WikiLeaks has revealed. In 2023 alone, IN collaborated with 4,291 media outlets, produced 4,799 hours of broadcasts reaching 778 million people, and trained over 9,000 journalists. Operating in 30+ countries, it has key offices in the US, London, Paris, and regional HQs in Kiev, Bangkok, and Nairobi. But there's more to the story: Founded in 1982, Internews claims to help media outlets achieve financial sustainability and promote "trustworthy information" - a mission it pursues with hefty US government funding. By 2023, the organization had partnered with nearly 4,300 media outlets, trained thousands of journalists, and simultaneously supported social media censorship initiatives. USAID alone poured \$472.6 million into Internews, though the organization also received funding from AOL-Time Warner



In 2023 alone, IN collaborated with 4,291 media outlets, produced 4,799 hours of broadcasts reaching 778 million people, and trained over 9,000 journalists. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK** Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and other private donors. — SPUTNIK